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THE GARDEN CALENDAR

A radio dialogue by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry and Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 48 associate NBC radio stations, Monday, August 3, 1936.

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U. S. Department of Agriculture

SALISBURY:

As the first number on our Department of Agriculture period today we have your old friend W. R. Beattie with his timely garden hints. What have you in mind for today W. R?

BEATTIE:

Something to eat as usual; seems like I'm always thinking about something good to eat from the garden.

SALISBURY:

What for example.

BEATTIE:

For the past few days that old garden jingle which goes, "The twenty-fifth of July, sow turnips, wet or dry" has been running through my head. I suppose that's because I have had a number of letters asking about growing turnips.

SALISBURY:

I suppose this is about the right time for sowing turnips all through the northern sections of the country, isn't it?

BEATTIE:

Yes, the last few days of July and the first week in August is a good time to plant turnips in the north. They can be planted most anytime from now on in the southern sections just so there is good moisture in the ground. I think most of our gardeners know all about growing turnips but a lot of folks might make better use of their turnips.

SALISBURY:

You mean better methods of storing them for winter use?

BEATTIE:

Yes, I mean better methods of storing the turnips and keeping them nice and fresh for use during the winter. Just the other day I was reading a report of some work done by the Food Research Division of the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils in making a kind of sauerkraut out of turnips.

SALISBURY:

Oh, I see. You mean sauer ruben, the German name for a product prepared from turnips by fermentation, just as sauerkraut is prepared from cabbage.

(over)

BEATTIE:

That's the idea. You see Morse we have about five more or less distinct methods of preserving summer-grown vegetables for winter use. These are, (1) storage in their natural state, (2) canning, (3) drying, (4) pickling, and (5) fermenting. Our German folks make the greatest use of the fermentation process in preserving foods for winter use. I heard of an old German farmer in Ohio who said that he always made four or five barrels of sauerkraut just to have a little on hand in case of sickness.

SALISBURY:

That is almost equal to your Ohio cucumber story, but, how about sauer ruben, is it superior to a good grade of cabbage sauerkraut?

BEATTIE:

No, but according to the report it is equal to kraut in flavor and texture. It is not only a means of preserving turnips for winter use, but it also adds variety to the daily fare. During the fermentation much of that pronounced turnip odor and flavor is lost and as a result many people who do not relish the turnip flavor find sauer ruben an appetizing food.

SALISBURY:

What kind of turnips, just the ordinary garden turnips?

BEATTIE:

All varieties of turnips and rutabagas or Swedish turnips were tried but the old-fashioned Purple Top Strap Leaf variety gave the best results. Tokyo, Purple Top White Globe, Extra Early White Milan and Shogoin Japanese were all good but the Swedes and Rutabagas did not make a good grade of sauer ruben.

SALISBURY:

Suppose you tell us just a little about the process of making sauer ruben.

BEATTIE:

Well to begin with you must have nice tender well grown but not overmature turnips. You cut off the tops and the roots and trim out any defective places then rinse the turnips in running water but do not rub or scrub them or this will remove the bacteria that causes the fermentation. In the experiments three methods of preparation were tried, first, they were sliced, second, ground through a food chopper, and third, shredded into long shreds. The shredded turnips gave the best product and one that more nearly resembled regular sauerkraut. The shredded material was salted and packed rather loosely in stoneware jars and simply kept at a temperature of 70 to 75 degrees until the fermentation ceased.

SALISBURY:

And after the fermentation was complete?

BEATTIE:

Three methods of keeping the sauer ruben were tried. By the first the product was packed in tin cans, covered with a weak brine solution,



sealed and then subjected to steaming for a few minutes. By the second method the sauer ruben was left in the jars but was covered with a thin layer of white mineral oil to exclude the air. By this method it was possible to keep the sauer ruben at room temperature for 6 months. By the third method the shredded turnips were packed in 2-quart glass jars and the lids put on but not clamped down. The jars were set in enamel pans to catch the juice that overflowed and once every 24 hours the jars were opened and the juice returned and at the same time the shredded turnips were pushed down with a wooden spoon. As soon as the gas ceased to be given off which was usually in about 4 days, the jars were sealed. Put up in this manner the product has kept for three years although no heat has been applied.

SALISBURY:

It occurs to me this third method would be the best for home use because those 2-quart glass jars would hold just about enough for the average family and no rehandling would be necessary. If any of you desire the full and complete directions for making sauer ruben just send for a copy of Department of Agriculture Circular No. 389 on the production of sauer ruben.

BEATTIE:

And in the meantime plant a good patch of turnips.

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